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ABSTRACT

The influences that home, family, and education have on Irish men's experiences of working life are explored based on interviews and questionnaire research carried out in North Dublin during 1997 and 1998. A two-stage research design was adopted. The first stage involved a short attitudinal-type questionnaire given to men at a sporting club. The questionnaire contained biographical and attitudinal questions on work, home, politics, class, and education. One hundred fifty-six questionnaires out of 250 were returned. The second stage was an in-depth interview with 10 men, which consisted of more formal questions about the respondent's present occupation and/or current educational participation. The findings suggest the following: (1) men retain notions that men should be the heads of households, that outside work is more important for men, and domestic work is more important for women; (2) the men's fathers had a significant influence on their attitudes toward work; (3) the majority of the men agreed that education was important for success, but nearly half felt that success is based on whom one knows and most felt that school and education did not prepare them for work. (Contains 45 references and four appendixes, including survey questions.) (SLR)

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Dad Was A Terrible Hard Worker: The Influence of Family and School on Dublin Men's Working Lives - Preliminary Findings*‡

John Goodwin

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the roles that home, family and school play in influencing Irish men's approach to work and experiences of working life. The paper begins by reflecting on the transition process from home and school to work as part of men's socialisation process. However, whilst a number of works have touched upon this process in the past very little of the existing literature examines men's qualitative experience of this process. The need to carry out such work and explore this process for men is then linked to a broader set of research aims. The paper then moves on to outline the methodology. Using data from 156 questionnaires and ten in-depth interviews with Irish men from North County Dublin, the impact of home and family on the transition to work process is explored. After the methodology, the themes and findings are explored. The paper concludes that in terms of family influence, the men's fathers did have some impact on attitudes to work. In terms of school, despite the recent increase in the demand for skilled labour, most of the respondents considered school to be of little value or help in determining future careers.

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1. Introduction

> The foundations of masculinity are laid down in boyhood, in a boy's experience of family, school and his peers. The family provides the basic emotional orientation, which is extended - institutionally in the education system and formally in the culture of peer groups - through to adolescence and manhood.
>
> (Tolson 1987: 22)

The process through which individuals learn their own gender identities, male or female, has been the subject of a great deal of research and is an area supported by an ever growing body of literature (for example see Oakley 1972; Sharpe 1976; Nicholson 1980; Levy and Carter 1989; Harris 1995; Connell 1995; Edley and Wetherell 1996; Mac an Ghaill 1996). The specific roles played by socialising agents such as the family and school have also attracted attention with authors focusing on a range of themes, including the development of sex-specific behaviour (Simons *et al* 1992; Booth and Amato 1994; Martin *et al* 1995), the role of the school in reproducing gender stereotypes (Dart and Clarke 1988), and the impacts that family and school have on the transition to work (Ashton *et al* 1976, 1986; Furlong 1992, 1993). Alongside this is an emerging literature on how men are socialised into work (Dennehy and Mortimer 1993; Goodwin 1999; Lloyd 1999). However, whilst all these works offer the reader some exploration of the transition from home and school to work, there is still a need for further research that explores in detail men's qualitative experience of this process.

> Traditionally young men have been introduced to the workplace by their fathers often finding them jobs in the industries in which they themselves worked. However, in those families where fathers were not working (or absent), or where their son's wanted to work in different sectors, fathers could not carry out this role...However...the young men rarely sought/received direction from their mothers...
>
> (Lloyd 1999: 28)

Lloyd's (1999) study on how young men make the transition from home and school to employment is particularly important as it is amongst the first to explore this process from a purely male perspective. Using data on sixty-three men, Lloyd found that most felt that school failed to prepare them for work. They also regretted not working harder at school, not realising the consequences of this until it was too late. Lloyd (1999) sets these findings clearly within the context of the UK economy where men's employment experiences have changed dramatically. In the UK, men's employment has remained numerically static for twenty years while women's employment levels have increased. Likewise young and older men or those without qualifications are more likely to be jobless with decline in what would traditionally be called 'men's jobs' (Lloyd 1999: 1). However such trends are not unique to the UK and men's employment has also changed dramatically in Ireland.

> ...many working-class men have not shown the resilience of women in coping with the economic changes of the past 30 years. One reason is conditioning. Up until the 1960s full-time male employment was the norm. Men expected education and training to end when they left school or finished an apprenticeship. In the recession, which hit traditional industries during the 1970s and 1980s, it was these men who tended to be made redundant. Job creation tended to be in the services area, where there was a pattern of predominantly female employment. Long-term unemployed men were forced into role reversal with no supports or back up...
>
> (The Irish Times, Monday, March 30 1998)

In Ireland there has been a large increase in the numbers of working women and a decline in traditionally male occupations, with those men without formal qualifications seeming to fair the worst

in the modern Irish labour market (O'Hearn 1998; Breen and Whelan 1996; OECD 1999). There has also been a move towards flexible working models (Fynes *et al* 1996; Tansey 1998).

Are Lloyd's findings replicable in Ireland? The aim of this paper is to explore the influences that home, family and education have on their Irish men's experiences of working life. General questions which underpin this aim include are parents or the family particularly influential in determining Irish men's attitudes to work? Did school prepare Irish men for what lay beyond the end of formal education? How do Irish men value their past education and training experiences and are such experiences perceived as being important for work? This paper is part of a broader research project that aims to

- explore the linkage between men and work in Ireland;
- explore the content and nature of their work and link it to the broader contextual life processes that they have experienced;
- explore the impact that education and training experiences may have had on their working lives;
- ascertain and explore the attitudes of the respondents to a number of important life issues such as sex equality, household participation, religion, work, life satisfaction, training and education and politics.

The underpinning rational for this broader project, and the reasons why documenting Irish men's lives (or men's lives generally) is important, are presented fully elsewhere (Goodwin 1999a and 1999). Suffice to say that men's qualitative experiences of work need to be explored in more detail as recently they have tended to be invisible, absent or marginal in the analyses offered in gender research (see also Cardigan *et al* 1987). Much of the work that does exist on men remains theoretical or political rather than empirical in origin.

The remainder of this paper is organised into three main sections. First the methodology is outlined and information on the location of the research is presented. Second, the data and findings are discussed around two general themes: *Influence of Home and Family*, and *Influence of School, Education and Training*. Both qualitative data in the form of responses from in-depth interviews and quantitative survey data are presented. The findings are also set within the context of some of the broader issues that link Irish men's employment family and school. Finally the paper concludes by reflecting on the complexity of men's transition from home and school to employment.

2. Methodology: Researching Men in Dublin

The methodology for this research has been presented in full elsewhere (see Goodwin 1999a) and as such only a brief summary of the main methodological issues will be presented here.

This paper is based on interviews and questionnaire research carried out in North Dublin during 1997 and 1998. As Goodwin (1999a) suggests Dublin's Northside is characterised with many of the social problems associated with inner city life such as high levels of unemployment poverty and social housing, large numbers of unskilled workers, high crime rates and educational disadvantage and early school leaving. The north city area covered by the research provided a distinct and contained location for the research to take place. Map of the are is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Map of Area. Source: Adapted from Northside Partnership (1996) From Welfare to Work : Improving Life in Our Community, Area Action Plan 1996-1999. The Northside Partnership, Dublin p 3.

An outline of the characteristics of the area and sample are provided in Appendices one and two.

The research adopted a two-stage design. The first stage of the research involved the dissemination of a short attitudinal type questionnaire to 156 men. It was arranged for the questionnaires to be distributed at a sporting social club in north Dublin. This venue was chosen as men from a variety of backgrounds and from throughout the Northside frequented the bar. Most importantly contacts had been made with the club previously via one of the clubs officials and access was guaranteed. The questionnaires were distributed over a period of around three weeks and were returned to a contact address in the Irish Republic.

The questionnaire contained a number of biographical questions on issues such as age, marital status, occupation and perceptions of social class. Along with this, thirty attitudinal questions were used in an attempt to elicit some information on attitudes to work, home and family, politics and social class and finally education. Around 250 questionnaires were disseminated and 156 were returned complete. Biographical information on the survey sample is presented in Appendix three.

The second stage of the research was a short series of in-depth interviews. However, as other researchers have noted (Pettigrew 1981) one of the main issues with in-depth interviews is access. This problem was overcome through a contact in a Northside training centre operated by local Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS), Ireland's Training and Employment Authority, in the Dublin north region. The interviews took place in 1998 and ten were completed.

The interviews began with a series of more formal questions structured around what they were doing at present, be it unemployed, working or participating in training or education. Along with these more formal questions, it was hoped to cover issues such as attitudes to work, experiences of work, home and family, experiences of school, reflections of social class and aspirations for the future (a full list of the topics covered and questions asked can be seen in the question guide, Appendix four). However,

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after the more formal questions were asked the interviews became 'looser', reflecting on these broader issues and the themes and issues raised by the respondent themselves and that were generated through the process of interaction between the interviewer and interviewed along the lines of Christian (1994) and Oakley (1981). The interviews were recorded with the respondent's agreement, and on average lasted for around 50 minutes. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed to develop a thematic account of Irish men's experiences of work and work related issues.

Table 1

Characteristics of Interviewees

Interviewee	Status	Age
1	Unemployed Male	Aged 30
2	Unemployed Male	Aged 19
3	Unemployed Male	Aged 23
4	Unemployed Male	Aged 41
5	Unemployed Male	Aged 27
6	Employed Male	Aged 35
7	Employed Male	Aged 49
8	Employed Male	Aged 28
9	Employed Male	Aged 24
10	Employed Male	Aged 40

Source: Interviews with Irish Men 1998.

The data from both the interviews and the questionnaires revealed a number of important issues and key themes in men's attitudes towards the family and school. Explicit within these themes are the men's own reflections of the extent to which their current lives, whether working or not, had been influenced by both the home and family and school. As with Goodwin (1999a), the interviewees will be allowed to speak for themselves, allowing the themes to emerge in their own words.

3. Themes and Findings

> It is common to find, within the industrialised nations, a more or less marked differentiation in the kinds of education received by boys and girls...Such clear differentiation between the sexes has obvious labour market consequences...
>
> (Breen and Hannan 1987: 37)

In Ireland the relationship between family, school and men's work is a complex one that sits at the intersection of a range of social practices and operates at different levels of society. For example, at one level both the Church and the State determine the role that the Irish family has in the future life opportunities of its children. Since 1937 this has been this set within the framework of the Irish constitution.

> The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children...The State shall, however, as guardian of the common good, require in view of actual conditions that the children receive a certain minimum education, moral, intellectual and social.
>
> (Bunreacht Na hÉireann 1937: Article 42)

However, taking a broader socio-historical perspective it is possible to see that there have been two broad processes central to understanding these relationships over the past fifty years. First, there has been a massive change in the demand for skilled and educated workers, marking a shift from the rural, self-sufficient agricultural economy to the post-industrial service and technology based economy that characterises Ireland today. Secondly there has been a shift in the emphasis of those institutions that function to ensure the future prosperity of Ireland's children. This is marked most clearly in the shift from a reliance on the land as a means for families to provide future economic security for individuals to a system that places greater emphasis on educational credentials as a means of securing economic success[1].

Support for this view can bee found in the work of Fahey (1995) who suggests that economic expansion (and the centrality of education attainment in that process) has meant that the role that parents play in the future of their children has changed.

> In the 1920s in Ireland, parents typically secured their child's economic future by passing on a farm or a business (material capital) - or, in the case of daughters, by securing a marriage to a neighbouring inheritor. In the 1970s they achieved the same end by ensuring their child, whether male or female, got good educational credentials (cultural capital). This...was one consequence of the growth of white-collar and professional occupations and the decline of farming and unskilled occupations in the Irish labour market...
>
> (Fahey 1995: 215)

What Fahey (1995) refers to are the consequences that industrialisation and economic growth (and the attendant changes in the home, family and school) have for working lives. Whereas in the past prospects may lay within the family farm or marriage, since the 1960s and 1970s educational qualifications have been crucial in determining an individuals social position. Important themes emerge out of these issues. First, the transition from the family farms of rural Ireland to the industrialised urban spaces of modern Ireland has largely been cited as the cause of the phenomenon of jobless growth that typified the Irish labour market of the 1980s. Second, this rural\urban transition and the rapid move to industrialisation has direct consequences for both those men who continued to work on small family farms and those who sought employment elsewhere in the Irish labour market.

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1 However, whilst both these process are important and both impact on the link between home, school and work, it would in inaccurate to suggest that they are both mutually exclusive. Indeed, a move from an agricultural economy to a technological one demands a highly skilled labour force and therefore requires the educational institutions to train that skilled labour. More accurately it is the location of these two processes (changes in the economy in the nature and role of the family changes) that is important in as much as changes here have changed the transition to work process for Irish men

> ...changes in society and in rural life have left many men without a sense of identity and with low self-esteem. Men's "bread-winning" role has been eroded, traditional skills are not valued any longer and many opportunities for social contact at fairs and festivals have disappeared. Most have only basic education and there is always a danger that depression will lead them to drink.
>
> (The Irish Times, Friday, September 17, 1999)

Finally, whereas in the past for some the transition from home or school to work was often a relatively linear and simple process of moving from school to working on the (family) land, the transition process now is far more complex. The gendered inheritance system of young men owning or working on family farms have been replaced with a system based on merit (Fahey 1995). Whilst such a system is still mediated by factors such as family or class background (Ashton and Maguire 1986; Furlong 1992, 1993), geographical location and parental attitudes, it is also affected by factors such as school provision and the aims of schooling (Breen and Hannan 1887; Clancy 1995), the changing nature of the family (Fahey 1995), education and career choices, educational attainment (Smyth and Hughes 1996) and ultimately the demand for labour.

Influence of Home and Family

The first theme considered within both the interviews and the questionnaire was the influence of home and family on work experiences. Those findings from the survey relating to home and family issues are presented in Table two.

In the survey of 156 men a range of questions relating to home and family, and the links between home, family and employment were asked. The data presented in table two suggests a number of interesting findings in relation to the themes presented in this paper. For example, thirty two percent of those men who identified themselves as working class agreed with the statement that the head of the household should be male. This is more than double the percentage of middles class men who agreed with this statement. Likewise those men who identified themselves as working class were also more likely than middle class men to agree with the statements such as 'men should handle the family finances' (28.5 per cent), 'a woman's place is in the home' (29 per cent), and finally 'it's okay for women to work, but what they really want is a home and family' (40.3 per cent). However, only seventy one per cent of men who identified themselves as working class (as compared to nearly eight six per cent of those men identifying themselves as middles class) thought that both men and women should do housework.

Whilst at first sight these questions do not relate explicitly to the research question presented here, they do provide some evidence as to the core values and beliefs relating to the family that exist for these Irish men. Such information is important in that these beliefs can impact upon the transition from home to employment. For example, it could be argued that strong beliefs such as the head of the household should be male could enhance the belief in young men that they need to enter employment as soon as possible. Indeed, the pressure to go to work that this belief would place on young men living in a household without a father or male figure head could be quite strong.

Table 2
Home and Family by Perceived Social Class - Attitude Survey Answers, % Agreed .

Question	All	Working Class	Middle Class
Marriage is for life.	59.0	62.9	56.4
The head of the household should usually be male	20.5	32.3	14.1
Both men and women should do housework.	78.8	71.0	85.9
Men should handle family finances	16.7	25.8	11.5
A women's place is in the home	18.6	29.0	12.8
It is okay for women to work, but what they really want is a home and family.	29.5	40.3	23.1
N	**156**	**62**	**78**

Source: Own Calculations based on data from the survey of Men's Experiences of Working Life in Ireland 1997-1998.

Likewise, when reflecting back on the respective roles that their parents played, beliefs such as a woman's place is in the home could impact on the way that men talk about and consider the socialising roles of their mothers. This view is further supported as when these results are taken in conjunction with other results from this research.

Goodwin (1999a) found that these men also agreed with a range of statements such as 'men get more work than women', 'men should get more training and work opportunities than women' and that 'it is less important for a woman to go out to work'. When taken together these findings suggest that there is a definite linkage between men and work and women and the home, and that men's involvement in the home is as a 'leader' or head, responsible important decisions relating to aspects of family life such as discipline or finance. It is likely that such views have come from the respondent's own childhood and through interaction with their own parents. These men have been socialised into a view that work is important for them as men as opposed to women (including their own mothers).

There is evidence of these perceptions in the ways that the men from the interviews actually talked about the roles of their parents or reflect on what work their parents did or still do. The quotations reflect clearly the perception of the mother as the homemaker and the father as the worker and breadwinner.

> *....me mam is a housewife she doesn't do anything (laughs) lucky for her.. no...er ..me da...me da's a ***** in Finglas... so he's in the.. he's on call everyday that he's not working....erm....she has she worked for er..she was a secretary for er ******** er.. yu know the building company that do the roads and all that...she was a secretary for them for I think it was a couple of years until she married me da and then she gave it up..*
>
> (Unemployed Male)

> *.....at one stage me father was working.. years ago..working with the taxis.. him and his brothers. Me mother was at home then she went out to work herself eventually and then gave it up and went back to work at home till she retired...she went to work cos she had nothin to do...just sit there on the home on her self and no where to go and nothin to do so she wanted to do something for a couple hours every day she went in 9-1 or something like that yu know... kind a work a half day working thing..*
>
> (Unemployed Male)

This view was maintained even where the mothers did work and centred on traditional notions of what constitutes women's work.

> *...my father was actually working at*******at the time..in.. as a labourer in the furniture end and he got me and he got an interview there...my mother erm a housewife and er always worked two or three jobs type a thing..er..like a lot of mothers in Ireland I reckon when they're trying to get a few bob together..mainly housework for other people round the area....***** is a fairly affluent kind of area, a lot big houses round here needin that kind of work yu know..so...erm...I remember my mother working, one job in a morning another job in the afternoon time...*
>
> (Employed Male)

> *.....well..me mam works as er....works on a checkout in a shop and me er.... father he is unemployed like... himself..... and me mam she does her work as it gets her out of the house..she just hates being in the house bored like....all her neighbours and all her friends an all work in the them as well like...and me dads he works like just ... has to work more or less...bills have to be paid an all...mam does it, pays a bit towards the bills but a lot of it is just for herself really.*
>
> (Unemployed Male)

> *...he was a general storeman...me ma she used to do a lot of cleaning work, she worked in a sweet factory yu know..I used to hate that, I used to hate ma going out cleaning... cos she used to come home and be wrecked....I just found the jobs that she was getting demeaning to me mother...my mother should not be down on her knees scrubbing someone else's floor...its...she shouldn't be doing it...*
>
> (Employed Male)

When reflecting on what his parents did one respondent highlighted the impact that the changing nature of the family and the difficulties in finding work on the family farm had on his father with the results that the father left the family farm to seek work in the Dublin region.

> *..my father was a farmer..er but.....er he had found that he had..he left the farm to come up here to find work cos there was like three or four brothers and two sisters and the farm was only forty odd acres...so of course he had er to come up when he was a younger man and find work..and my father was er...then changed firms well changed jobs but he erm ...erm spent terrible hours erm studying horticulture proper so he had erm worked for the rich people in Howth....as in erm...****** and he of course met my mum she had worked there as a cook years ago when young.. er... younger girls were forced to leave the land too to come here and find work..and they of course met at a party that was being held around Christmas time and met each other and went out with each other and there as five of us as proof (laughs)...*
>
> (Unemployed Male)

Did they Influence your Attitudes to Work ?

The literature suggests that parental influence is very important in the transition from home and school to work and that it can an impact on future career or work choice. The literature also suggests that this is a gendered process with boys traditionally modelling themselves on their fathers and girls becoming like their mothers or using their mothers as a role model. At the very least it is suggested that, even if their sons do not follow directly in their 'father's footsteps', it is the father who is most influential.

In the interviews, the influence that the men's parents had on the respondents was addressed sometimes directly with a question on whether or not their parents had influenced their attitudes to work. At other times the theme emerged from the broader discussion.

> *..erm I think my father did..he was a civil engineer which is a different type a completely different type of engineering to what I'm doing erm....did they?..not particularly no, they gave encouragement all right but no they wouldn't have, they wouldn't, they never, they never ever actually sat down and said what do you want to do.*
>
> (Employed Male)

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*...yes...erm..they er....they..I am very... my mother never worked..after I was born...but my da would be...would be very very er...laidback..he would never bring any part of his working life home..it was very much it started here and ended there and it wasn't going to interrupt family life in anyway..and I am very much the same...but up until the time he retired.he had a relatively senior job in ******....but I never knew that until he retired...*

(Employed Male)

...yes my father certainly did and saw me following him into a trade or even better...but me...me mother was at home...the way Dad liked it (laughs)...but she would encourage me as well sometimes..but me father did...although he didn't talk about work much at home, but playing golf or having a drink with me then he...he'd tell m an ask me..

(Employed Male)

erm.. I think...they, they always come and ask yu 'what do you want to do' I say , I probably I didn't make up my mind what I wanted to be until er I left school. I left school and picked up a load of leaflets and I kinda applied for every course that was on it...the only one I got was the apprenticeship as the electrician so I went for that and stuck with it...which thank god knows I stuck with it...although I didn't get a job out it thank god I did it at least now if I do decide to go back to the alarms...if I don't like I can just say right, forget that pick up the tools and go back as I was thinking if I do, if I get this alarms, that's another like I be a sparks plus an alarm installer..then...I.. want to I can go away..I can either go to...my uncle has a factory over in er Abu Dabi...and er I can go there and work for him, I can go to Australia for go as a sparks, I can go to America if I want as I have that bit of paper...

(Unemployed Male)

me mam wasn't really..me da was really into working more than.. he always wanted me to do me leaving but he was more into getting me into the, straight into a job straight away cos of me older brother....he more or less was collecting off the dole was well as working an..in me uncles shop and he was...pullin in 200 pound a week with all that...didn't mind that me da was gettin 300 pound for the same thing.... just wasting out his time an all..he was offered an apprenticeship as a butcher ...that's more or less a dead trade no so..he eventually got his head together and did this course an now he's sorted with a company n'all and he's making loads of money n'all and he's more or less buying a house in a few weeks time.

(Unemployed Male)

...er... er with the father now he always thought I was goin to the building game and be sorted for the rest of me life..but when I told him I didn't like it...he was just...he says 'okay your on your own..you're old enough now you can't come home without a wage or otherwise you'll be walking on the streets'.... if I weren't bringing any money I wouldn't be liven at home simple...we had a big family. I was the fourth eldest and it was my job to go out an erm...I didn't mind that cos I thought it was the normal thing to do...but when I look back with what I know now, I'd have me whole life changed...but er I didn't get a job in the first two weeks...he gave me that grace....

(Unemployed Male)

oh dad....oh dad..of course was a terrible hard worker..very hard worker..like even now I cant think how he had er worked all of those hours and er of course that was er why he had died because he had never missed a day of erm..been out sick... never...I feel it was terrible that he..that if I erm could see him now I'd say 'Dad erm slow up...enjoy life a bit a more don't be always working, don't be always pleasing other people try and.... please yourself once in while' and er of course he had chest pain and he had said nothing to mum so he of course lay in the bed and mum thought it was very strange and er she phoned up and said 'Sorry but Charlie's sick and wont be in'..so I'd say about after about a day he had..she had seen his leg and it was all swollen and dad of course was old fashioned he hated erm Doctors or the thoughts of a Hospital so he of course didn't say a word..a blood clot.....so that...in that sense er had worked himself to his grave

(Unemployed Male)

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> *...da..?...in er ways oh yeah..I hate being in any work or job that I cannot see the fruits of my work I hate like in CIE I just took of mailbags and put them on to trains..sweep the platforms..it was a dead end job with no future and of course that was part of the reason why I left but I..there is great satisfaction in getting something that is not working or broken or whatever and you keep at it and you fix it and it works its great...so like that I had learned from him..er....like to show work and to have it there in front of you and have something to aim for....as in being there proof of your work*
>
> (Unemployed Male)

Influence of School, Education and Training

Commentators (see Sweeny 1998; O'Hearn 1998; Lee 1998; Geoghegan 1999; OECD 1999) have suggested that Ireland's high growth rates have not only been underpinned by factors such as foreign direct investment, tight government fiscal policy and stable macroeconomic policy and European Union transfers, but also changes in education that have led to increased levels of education and skills. Indeed, whilst the status of education in Ireland has always been high now the value of education for future employment prospects goes without question. For example, Fogarty *et al* (1984) found

> The link between education and occupation is very much as might be expected. "Graduates" are more likely to be in or on their way to professional jobs. People with middle level education are strongly represented in the "non-manual" jobs. Those educated to 16 or earlier are likely to be in manual work...Farmers have a relatively low level of education...
>
> (Fogarty et al 1984: 56)

More recently the Youthscape Survey (1999) of 1,200 teenagers found that they had a different outlook on life from their parents but that Irish males tended to feel similar to their fathers in outlook and females more similar to their mothers. In the survey, the males seemed to be more attracted than the females by the notion of owning a business and becoming significantly wealthy. The female respondents were significantly more attracted by the notion of having children and owning ones own home. Regardless of ambition, the respondents identified having a good education as being important for success and future prosperity. Such attitudes are supported elsewhere. Barrett *et al* (1999) found that between 1987 and 1994 the numbers of individuals leaving school with no qualifications fell by 9 per cent. During the same period they also found 6 per cent increase of those successfully completing second level education (Barrett *et al* 1999: 85).

> The increase in earnings inequality and returns to education that has occurred in the USA and the UK in recent years has not been see in other OECD countries to the same degree...the Irish case again appears to represent a counter example, with the supply of highly educated labour and returns to that education both rising rapidly compared to other countries
>
> (Barrett *et al* 1999: 94)

The second set of themes to be addressed in this paper relate to the influence of school, education or training experiences on Irish men's working lives. The data from the survey broadly relating to education and training are presented in Table three. This data represents the percentage of men who agreed with the attitude statements contained within the survey. Alongside this is information on the highest qualification achieved by the respondent. For both the attitude and qualifications data, the findings are presented for the sample as a whole and by the men's own *perceived* social class.

Examination of the data suggests that amongst all men in the sample, the vast majority agreed with the view that education was important for success. This finding is supported to some extent by the fact that only a third of the respondents thought that training was a waste of time if there was no job at the end of it. By definition, two thirds of the all men sample thought that this view was incorrect indicating a strong commitment to education and training. However, despite the very positive perception of

education and its value for success nearly half the men in the sample also agreed that success is based on whom you know rather than what you know. It is here that men's own perception of social class also appears to have an impact. For those men who perceive themselves as working class, the percentage that agrees with this statement increased to over fifty six per cent. For those men who perceive themselves as middle class the percentage agreeing falls to below forty per cent.

Perceived membership of class grouping also appears to have some impact on the levels of agreement with the statement that training is a waste of time if there is no job at the end of it. Nearly twenty per cent more of the men who perceived themselves as working class agreed with this view compared to those men who would identify themselves as middle class.

Table 3

Attitudes to Education and Training % Agreed and Highest Qualification by Perceived Social Class - Attitude Survey Answers

Question	All	Working Class	Middle Class
Attitudes			
Training is a waste of time if there is no job at the end of it	32.7	43.5	26.9
Education is important for success	84.0	82.3	83.3
Success is who you know not what you know	46.8	56.5	39.7
Highest Qualification			
None	5.1	6.5	2.6
Junior Cert	7.1	12.9	3.8
Leaving Cert	12.2	9.7	12.8
Third Level	24.4	9.7	33.3
Vocational	30.1	30.6	32.1
Other	6.4	9.6	5.1
No Response	14.7	21.0	10.3
N	**156**	**62**	**78**

Source: Own Calculations based on data from the survey of Men's Experiences of Working Life in Ireland 1997-1998.

In terms of the highest qualification achieved by the men, for the whole sample the vast majority of men either had a Leaving Certificate or a vocational qualification. However, the achievement rates of these qualifications greatly differed by perceived social class. For example those men who perceived themselves as middle class were more likely to have a Leaving Certificate or a qualification from Third-Level institution or a Vocational Qualification. For those men who identified themselves as working class the highest qualification achieved was a vocational qualification, with drastically fewer men in this group achieving Leaving Certificate or higher qualifications.

There is also some limited evidence to suggest that the qualification level of the men had some impact on the attitudes towards education. For example, thirty four per cent of those who agreed that success is based on who you know rather than what you know, had a vocational qualification as their highest qualification. Only nineteen percent of those who agreed with this view had qualifications at Third level.

Some of these themes were addressed in the in-depth interviews and the respondents were asked whether or not education was important for success at work.

...I'd say it's a big step yeah...erm...because..I think the educational background is more important than people working for companies than er...natural ability at a job..I find that...they do take the education into account an awful lot...

(Employed Male)

...oh yeah...very important..without education you're nowhere

(Employed Male)

....well its only important I think if you go out with a trade yu know what I mean , you cant walk into a craftsman's job with ABC under your belt, you have to know the skills...practical vocational yu know what I mean, either way or you wont get it yu know..so education comes into that factor yu know

(Unemployed Male)

...no....I erm I don't like the school kind of environment...in school your with all your friends and all but er... I didn't like the attitude of teachers..teachers the attitude they had was they we are here to teach and if you don't listen you going to get punished...but....I went to Kevin Street...their attitude was we are here to teach and if you don't want to listen fair play to yu...you don't have to come in or you can just sit there and draw if you want...play with yourself do anything you want like and er...and that's the way school should be like, for people who are interested if you want to learn ..they should teach you and for those don't they should say...they should find something else for them to do like, given them class off or give them this or that an...

(Unemployed Male)

...no I hated school....being in doors like, I hated being locked up like..it felt like being in a jail of somethin (laughs)..I didn't mind gettin told off or whatever with teachers or anything..I just hated being inside all the time...hated it I just always wanted to be outside with me pals just goin round lookin in windows.

(Unemployed Male)

*... well school was hard when you have stammer..the kids always pick on the odd one out... be it a hair lip or a club foot...kids are so cruel...but then you tend to learn how to control it and give it back and like and...say if some older younger lads would say to me 'ahh...you've got a stammer P P P Paddy ******' I would say 'okay but what happens if you have a brother or sister who has a stammer? I guarantee you that you wouldn't slag me about it'...that erm...that makes them think really which is good*

(Unemployed Male)

I would rather be at work than at school... when I was working out there I had plenty of money or somethin...but the only reason I had plenty of money was because I was in school..if I hadn't been in school I would have wasted it on stupid stuff...I'd had to pay more housekeeping and more towards the family...or spending me money on travel cos if wasn't in school I would have to work even more

(Unemployed Male)

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Whether or not the men felt that education was important or not, they were asked whether or not school or education had actually prepared them for working life. From the quotations below it can been seen that regardless of their current status the men were more uniform in their attitudes and experiences. School may be perceived as valuable for some of the men but they uniformly agreed that school and education did not prepare them for work.

no...cos I dropped out of school early because the financial income was more important than the educational achievement at the time...I would have liked to have gone further in school...and I have found along the way that that has gone against me..but I've gotten by..I have managed... I have done some private course in mostly art-related subjects but I have mostly been working when I have done them..I have found that...if I am doing interviews for jobs I can answer questions no problem...but as soon as they hit me educational background.....they find a weak spot....they look at me and think ' this guy's thick he dropped out of school'...

(Employed Male)

erm..erm...that's going back a long time now (laughs)..erm I don't think so...er..my secondary school was a technical school so it was kinda more geared towards a trade area than anything else so that area yes...er...but looking at my young kids now and... and seeing if they are geared towards the world of work...I would say...I would yes in today's terms...excluding myself and talking about my kids I think schooling has improved a whole lot...erm ...I think I enjoyed TEC, I can't really remember primary and all that type of thing erm..I had problems all right, learning problems, as I was never any good at reading or writing actually when I left school...spelling was atrocious....

(Employed Male)

...no they were pretty poor when it came to careers advice..I took any advice from my brothers I've four older brothers.....more from my own family than school, schools pretty poor in that respect

(Employed Male)

I went to a fee paying school but ..er...no not all...not at all, I was totally involved in sports and all and it was just assumed that I was going to have a great career and that was it...there was dam all gudiance..er..ermm...I never really got my head together I don't know why..I never knew what I wanted to be or, I knew what I didn't want to do but I didn't know what I wanted to do... I didn't want to work in an office scratchin for a livin..I wanted to be a professional..but er...at the end of school I didn't have the results to go to college or anything like that...if I'd gone to college things would have been different for me...

(Employed Male)

...no..when I left school...when I left school and I came into work I er...kinda got a shock, yu know what I mean, it kinda it me hit me 'what am I doin?' ....once I started out..when I was in school I wasn't gettin paid then when I started gettin paid I thought 'oh I'm gettin this for doing the same hours as what I did at school'..it started getting better and better and better, like erm...it doesn't..like people the teachers 'ah you do your maths you do this you'll need this when you grow up' I had decided to go into a trade after school so maths and all that out the window English history out the window, out there picking up a screwdriver you don't need a...to know your alphabet or when your working a couple of nights or somethin

(Unemployed Male)

...it doesn't prepare you for work but at least it gives you something kinda, yu know, discipline or... you have your principle and you have your teachers whereas in work you have you boss or you managers you have all that and you have your sparks you have every...but in that kinda way yes but.....preparing for work no.

(Unemployed Male)

no.... in Ireland at that time you got no offer of help..the classes were so big if you fell behind you were just left there...and primary especially in primary you get know home work and if your weren't paying attention you'd get a belt..that was the normal thing..but I was never into school not as a learning process ...cos all they were doin in schools was learnin how to fight, stand up for yourself...that was basically it. If you didn't learn how to stand up for yourself...you..I wouldn't be here....it was a useful skill..learn how to survive. But with regards the educational it was goin nowhere.....looking back now...if I had a choice I wouldn't have gone to school, but at that time that was the norm that was..but basically we were goin there for one thing, to be kept off the road for about four or five hours a day and....it was basically it. But after that time I was often sayin to myself I should have gone to secondary.. I maybe could have picked up a skill as a woodworker or a mechanic or something like that...

(Unemployed Male)

In the above quotations one issue that was faced by some of the men was the need to leave school early and get a job, whether it be for family and financial reasons or just simply that work was far more preferable to school. One of the unemployed men interviewed however, reflected on why he left school and talked about how he felt when he returned to education to complete his qualifications.

R: ... I left school when I was 14.....we're a typically Irish family..... were a big family and when your 14 you have to get out and get work to support...the rest of them but basically the reason why I went back to er...do me leaving cert...I felt I...it was something I wanted to achieve all me life...

JG: How did you feel when you achieved it

R: ....er..over the moon..the subjects that I took I thought I was going to fail and make a complete arse of it..but er... it was hard, hard in the beginning ...took me about six weeks to settle in ...with all the kids calling me 'look at him going away to school, the state of him' calling me old fella and this that and the other...but er..gradually now I accepted it and got on grand but er...I'd felt like ... I would have to go to an all adult education place....where its especially for you

JG: How did you feel about leaving school at 14

...well at 14 in Ireland that was sort of the norm in my family. My father he left school at 14 and er...most of my family we all...we weren't the greatest educated but er we survived... we got... we knew what we wanted but er I started on the building sites and stuck it for about a year and a half and then I got a job then in er a factory.. which the money wasn't great but I got a trade out of it..that was useless to me. I started of as a labourer down in Kerry..had to go for a year...but er after that I lost interested in it...I wasn't a natural at doin it but er the reason why I left ....my attitude has changed over the years..but er I felt I was being used and I couldn't er.. couldn't cope with it.... I felt I was being used on the building sites as a 'dogs body'..cos I was a labourer or maybe cos I wasn't into it but er...most people saw me as a tea boy 'get the kettle on' every hour of the day..I was worth more than that..when I started work first I was working for father but he had another job and so he left that one...but I was learnin off two people but after they went another crowd come in and Id be asked to sweep floors, which I didn't mind, but er...not standing out when its pissing with rain as a dogs body

(Unemployed Male)

4. Discussion

This paper began with the aim of exploring the influences that home, family and education have on their Irish men's experiences of working life. The focus in particular was on whether parents or family were influential in determining Irish men's attitudes to work and whether school prepared Irish men for employment. Research exploring such experiences of British men found that their future careers were rarely influenced by their mothers and that, whilst regretting not working harder at school, school failed to prepare them for work (Lloyd 1999). With these research questions in mind, a number of interesting findings emerge from the data.

First, from the survey it can be seen that some of the men surveyed retain notions that men should be the head of the household and that there should be a marked domestic division of labour. Such findings are accentuated or mediated by notions of social class. These themes are also maintained within the qualitative data, with those men interviewed seeing their mothers as housewives or where they did work, work took a secondary role to the home and was largely domestic in nature. Fathers however, were reflected on as workers or potential workers, who worked hard and in the main carried out hard physical tasks. In one interview the rural/urban migration process also emerged, reflecting the mid-twentieth century trend of leaving home for Ireland's urban centres.

Second, as to whether their parents influenced the respondents attitudes and approaches to work, in line with Lloyd's findings, all the men seemed to suggest that their fathers had had some influence to a greater or a lesser extent but their mothers had been less important in this process. The interesting point here was that this remained true regardless of whether or not the respondent was working or not. However, the influence of the parents on their children's attitudes to work took many forms. For example, sons were directly following their fathers in building, construction or engineering. In terms of attitudes there is evidence that for the unemployed men, fathers instilled a view that work was hard and that money had some importance. They also appear to have influenced the view that individuals should be able to see the 'fruits of their labour' as work could be a laborious and alienating task - a fact which one respondents reflects on bitterly, citing work as a direct cause of his fathers death. Work seems to have been presented as a 'normal' and 'natural' thing to do.

Unlike the unemployed men whose fathers seem to be very directive in forming their attitudes to work, the fathers of those interviewees who were working seemed to take a less direct route, talking to their sons about work and influencing their attitudes, but in the main keeping it out of and separate to the home.

Interestingly one or two of the interviewees also pointed towards the influence of other significant males in forming their attitudes to work. The uncle earning large amounts of money overseas or brothers with their business seem also to be important in the formation of work attitudes.

Third, the data on schools suggests that for these men education and training are only important if there is a job at the end of it and social class mediates the extent to which the men value education. Social class also seemed to determine whether or not these men had qualifications and whether or not the qualifications were vocational or academic. These two findings suggest that working class men see the value of education and training if it is related to their work and, if it is, they are more likely to do it. This view is supported in the qualitative data where the relative vale of school for success seems to differ by the current employment status of the individual. For example, those men who were currently employed were more likely to look back favourably on school and place emphasis on the value of education for work. This contrasts almost totally to the perceptions of those men who were unemployed. For them education was only important if it related to a specific trade and most chose to answer the question by reflecting on their negative experiences of school life. School for many of the unemployed men was a harsh indoor environment, which they disliked and claimed they gained nothing from.

From the data we can conclude the men's transition from home, family and school is mediated by a complex mix of social process that has undoubtedly changed over time. However, as with Lloyd's findings it appears that the one constant in men's socialisation to work is the key role played by the fathers. Fathers or other significant males remain important in the formation of work attitudes and ultimately have influenced the male experiences of work in ways that mothers or females relations could not. More worryingly for educational policy makers is the view that school and the education

process 'failed' the men interviewed. In a society dependant now more than ever on the skills of its labour force such negative perceptions of the Irish education system are bound to cause concern.

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Appendix 1 - Characteristics of the Area

Characteristic	Number	Percentage
Population	105,984	
Labour Force	46,744	
Registered Unemployed	9,281	19.85
Registered Long Term Unemployed	5,500	
Under age of 20 with Primary Education Only	23,316	22.0
Left School by Age of 15	40,486	38.2
Lone Parent Households	5,178	
Rented Local Authority Homes	–	13.5
Professional Occupation	–	20.3
Semi & Unskilled Manual		25.7

Source: Adapted from Northside Partnership (1996) From Welfare to Work : Improving Life in Our Community, Area Action Plan 1996-1999. The Northside Partnership, Dublin.

Appendix 2 - Characteristics of Survey Sample

Characteristic		Number	Percentage
Place of Birth			
	Dublin	93	59.6
	Not Dublin	63	40.4
Age			
	16-20	6	3.8
	21-30	35	22.4
	31-40	29	18.6
	41-50	45	28.8
	51-60	30	19.2
	61+	8	5.1
	No response	3	1.9
Marital Status			
	Married	105	67.3
	Single	42	26.9
	Divorced	1	0.6
	Widowed	5	3.2
	No Response	3	1.9
Does Partner Work			
	Yes	57	36.5
	No	51	32.7
	No Response	48	30.8
Children			
	Yes	103	66.0
	No	53	33.0
Ever Unemployed			
	Yes	91	58.3
	No	63	40.4
	No Response	2	1.3
N		156	100.0

Source: Own Calculations based on data from the survey of 'Men's Experiences of Working Life in Ireland 1997-1998'.

Appendix 3: The Attitude Questions Asked in the Survey

- Having any job is better than being unemployed.
- If I didn't like a job I'd pack it in, even if there was no other job to go to.
- Work gives men a sense of purpose.
- Men gain more from work than women.
- Men should earn more money than women.
- There are some jobs women cannot do as well as men.
- All men should have the opportunity to work full-time.
- The head of the household should usually be male.
- It is less important for a woman to go out to work than it is for a man.
- More men than women should get training or work.
- Women who do not have to work should not do so.
- Part-time work is mainly for women.
- Training is a waste of time if there is no job at the end of it.
- Working is an important part of being an Irish male.
- Marriage is for life.
- I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life.
- Both men and women should do housework.
- Men should handle family finances.
- A women's place is in the home.
- There is one law for the rich and one for the poor.
- Irish working people do not get a fair share of wealth.
- Irish Politicians are in politics for their own benefit.
- My religion is very important to me.
- I have little control over the things that happen to me.
- Social class is important in Ireland.
- In society some people will always have more power.
- Education is very important for success.
- I am happy enough if I have the money to do the things I enjoy.
- Success is more about who you know rather than what you know.
- It is okay for women to work, but what they really want is a home and family.

Appendix 4: Example Question /Topic Guide For Interviews

These were the typical questions asked in an interview based around the themes of work experiences, attitudes to work, family background, school, views on class, politics and the Irish economy.

- Could you start by telling me what you are doing now?
- Do you think it's important for men to work?
- Is money the most important thing in a job?
- Do you think it's more important for men to work than women ?
- What did/do your parents do?
- Have your parents had any kind of influence on your attitude to work?
- What about school did that have any influence on your approach to work?
- Do you think education is important?
- You often hear people say what they think is a good job...what do you think is a good job?
- You have mentioned the jobs that you have had, have you had periods of unemployment was well?
- Does being unemployed concern you?
- Do you think that kind of informal economy is important in Ireland?
- Do you think social class is important?
- What social class would you put yourself in?
- At the moment Irelands economy is doing really well. Do you think everyone is sharing in that?
- Do you think you need money to be happy?
- What do you see yourself doing in five years time?
- Do you think to get a good job is your own responsibility?

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